

Human Services Funding Committee / Community Development Committee (CDC)
Minutes
October 10, 2007

Members Attending: Isaac BenEzra, Claude Tellier, Jana McClure, Paulette Brooks
Town Staff: Roy Rosenblatt
Absent: Calvin Brower, Tamara Rutland-Mills

The Community Development Committee met in room 101 of the Bangs Center commencing at 7:10 p.m.

The committee learned that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has, again, designated Amherst as a "mini-entitlement" community. This will make the town eligible for \$800,000 of Community Development Block Grant per year, or 1.6 million over two years. Amherst first became a mini-entitlement community in FY 2005. When the State determined that Amherst was no longer a mini-entitlement community funding was cut to \$275,000 to transition the community off the CDBG funding. These funds were used to modify the bathrooms at the Bangs center. The regulations allowed to remodel because of a "barrier" issue but not for compliance with ADA regulations. Funding was also set aside to help provide a down payment for 3, yet to be chosen, first time home buyers.

Out of the \$800,000 that Amherst can apply for, 18% to 20% may be used for administrative expenses, and 20% to 25% may be used for social service funding. The bulk of the funds must be used for community development in a capital expenditure. The state requires that the funds must benefit low and moderate income residents by 51%. In order to apply for the CDBG funds, a project must meet all the state regulations and be part of the Amherst Community Action Plan's priority list. The grant application must explain why the project is a community need and why it promotes self sufficiency for its residents. After the funding is received, the State requires oversight and strict quarterly reporting

The committee discussed the Amherst Survival Center and its needs. Mr. BenEzra reported that there are 25 homeless persons in Amherst and 25 homeless persons from surrounding communities that are served through the Survival Center. A mini-entitlement grant can only be used for Amherst and not applied to a regional problem. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts evaluates each community and measures the tax rate per capita, and determines which communities are entitled to receive CDBG funds.

The committee then discussed a capital improvements "laundry list".

- Survival Center facility
- Rolling Green Apartments (40 affordable units have permanent vouchers. 200 units count on Housing inventory)
- Olympia Drive (30 units)
- Main Street Construction project (using 2nd CDBG grant funding – 2.9 million for 11 units)
- Chestnut Court – Kitchen renovations (with 3rd year CDBG funding of \$460,000)
- Pomeroy Lane drainage (past funding)

- First time home buyers ("transition out" 4th year CDBG funding of \$275,000 = up to 6 families down payment of \$50,000 each)

Potential projects discussed:

\$600,000 to buy 3 homes at \$200,000, renovate and re-sell with a deed restriction.

College Inn for 1.5 million – SRO (Single Room Occupancy)

Rolling Green – 200 units – negotiate with the Housing Trust out of Chicago.

Help with renovations to guarantee affordable units.

The application is due in Boston on February 15, 2008. The public hearing must be at least 2 months before the application is sent. (Dec 15th, 2007). The committee decided to hold a public Hearing before the Select Board during the month of November. The role of the committee will be to review projects, make recommendations to the Select Board, take complaints about projects and perhaps mediate. The committee will work with both the Social Service component and capital project of the CDBG funds and Social Services funding by the town.

The committee discussed prior contributions and the need for child care tuition assistance. Funding was provided in FY 06 and FY07 and will last from now until June 2008, although there may be a gap in funding. \$60,000 out of \$140,000 social service funding was delegated to Family outreach of Amherst for a Spanish speaking outreach worker and case management. Reporting requirements have been difficult to process. Whatever priorities the committee sets, the agency awarded the grant must comply with the strict State reporting requirements.

MOTION: The committee unanimously voted to support child care tuition assistance as a priority for the social service portion of Community Development Block Grant funding.

Next Community Development Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 24, 2007 at the Bangs Center. Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.